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Biden Marks Child Abuse Prevention Month

Highlights Staggering Statistics; Calls Upon Adults to Speak for Voiceless Victims

Wilmington – Before the age of 18, 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys will be sexually abused. Only 1 in 10 of those young victims will report their abuse, in part, because 90% of victims know their abuser. Citing these staggering statistics, Attorney General Beau Biden called citizens to action today as he marked the beginning of *Child Abuse Prevention Month*, held annually each April.

Every day across the United States, five children die as a result of abuse. Many, like three-month-old Marissa Galloway from Seaford, are under the age of four. Marissa died in 2010 after her father fractured her skull. Jason Galloway was convicted of that crime in February, 2012 and sentenced to life in prison last month.

“We must ask ourselves what we can do to better protect children,” Biden said. “First and foremost, we can never forget that kids are not responsible for protecting themselves; that is our job as adults. We all know the sayings about minding your own business, or that good fences make good neighbors. But that’s not the case when it comes to stopping child abuse. As individuals, as neighbors, and as a community we must remain vigilant on behalf of children.”

The impact of abuse and neglect can reverberate throughout a child’s lifetime, pushing them onto a negative path where they are 59% more likely to be arrested as a juvenile, 28% more likely to be arrested as an adult and 30% more likely to commit violent crime.

Biden noted that Delaware law is clear when it comes to reporting child abuse. Every adult “who knows or in good faith suspects child abuse or neglect” must report their suspicions to law enforcement by calling Delaware’s Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-292-9582. The potential consequences for failing to report reflect the seriousness of that obligation, with offenders facing fines up to \$10,000 for the first offense and up to \$50,000 for any subsequent violations.

For reporting to be effective at protecting kids from abuse, adults need to know the signs. To help them better identify the signs of child abuse and understand their obligation to report abuse, last September Biden’s office partnered with the YMCA of Delaware and Prevent Child Abuse Delaware to launch the *Stewards of Children* training program statewide. With the goal of training 35,000 adults over five years, the program highlights facts about abuse, explores common situations in which it occurs, reviews ways to talk to children and other adults about it, and discusses effective protection strategies. More than 2,000 citizens, including staff from the Attorney General’s office and Family Court, have already received training, and in February the University of Delaware, Delaware State University, Delaware Tech, and Wilmington University announced that their faculty, staff and students would receive training as well. More information about this program is available at

www.Darkness2Light.org. Delaware agencies, companies, and civic and community organizations can bring this training to their sites by contacting the Attorney General's office at (302) 577-5206.

“Every child deserves to grow up safe and free from abuse and neglect, and it is every adult's duty – legally and morally – to help them do so,” Biden said. “If you suspect a child is being abused, if something just doesn't seem right to you, trust your instincts and call our Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-292-9582. There are so many children suffering in silence – be their voice.”

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